

Mary Jane Coulter

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Mary Jane Coulter (b. December 31, 1948) is a native and lifelong resident of Scotts Run, WV. She is the executive director of the Scotts Run Museum and owns the building in which it is housed. In this interview, she speaks about the history of Scotts Run and her experience growing up in the Scotts Run community, as well as her role in the Scotts Run Museum and Trail.

This interview is part of a collection of interviews conducted with Scotts Run natives/residents and/or members of the Scotts Run Museum.

<https://scottsrunmuseumandtrail.org/>

EH: Emily Hilliard

MC: Mary Jane Coulter

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EH: Okay. So why don't you introduce yourself and tell me who you are and where you're from and when you were born.

MC: My name's Mary Jane Coulter and I am from West Virginia, Scotts Run, a coal camp area that has 13...that is made up of 13 communities. I'm from the Osage community. I was born living in, when my parents lived in Osage and I continued to live my lifetime. I'm a lifer here in Scotts Run. And I was born in 1948. December 31st, 1948.

EH: New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve!

MC: New Year's Eve. Mmhm. Yes.

EH: What was it like growing up in Scotts Run?

MC: Well, I...I spent most of my life in two households on Osage Hill. I lived with my namesake, or who... my mom's best friend. I was named after her. And my living with Mary Jane was a middle class home but when the 50% of the time that I lived with my mother, was poverty and I... when I was with the Gusties, I lived with the... we had a household of 4 persons: Mary Jane and her husband Eddie and her son Eddie who I, you know, looked upon as a brother. But when I was with my mother who was very poor and ill, I lived with 5 of 8 brothers. 3 were gone off to the service and I lived with them when I lived with them. It was a totally different lifestyle altogether. When I was with the Gusties, for example, that meant living with modern furniture, fancy wallpaper, lace curtains, holiday dinners and events, a telephone and a television that had...that actually had reception! (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

02:39

MC: And hot running water and an indoor bathroom, and new school clothes and shoes and cookies and milk at night. But you know, my life was totally different when I lived in the coal camp with my mother. And with my 8 brothers. The biggest advantage was, I was... the only utilities we had was electricity and cold running water. And the advantage of being the only girl of all brothers, I got to get in the No. 2 tin tub first! (laughs) That was a big advantage! And but I learned how to cook and bake on a coal cook stove. Wash clothes, scrub floors and wash clothes in a ringer washer. A lot of skills that I needed throughout my life to this day.

EH: Mmhm.

MC: But most of the time I spent with one friend, Louise, who is still my lifetime friend, that lives on my property now!

EH: Okay (laughs)

MC: Now the things that we did: we rode bikes, played jacks, played hopscotch and jumped rope. Things like that that back then, and we also walked-- I think it's around 2 miles to The Shack neighborhood house

for swimming and roller skating during the summer. And a lot of the times Louise and I would come from Osage Hill downtown in the summertime and peep through the windows of the beer gardens and (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

MC: And watch the adults drink and have a good time and try to dance and we'd make fun of them. (laughs) And a lot of times we'd catch a lot of good fights and arguments too over dice games and stuff like that. I think that went on in all coal camps at that time.

EH: Was that here in Osage?

MC: Yeah, this was right in Osage, yes. And I was always thought it was...growing up in a... well I thought then it was a little city with a train going through it full of coal! Right in the middle of the town! We had grocery stores and plenty of beer gardens--they called them beer gardens then. And clothing stores and grocery stores, pawn shops, and before I was born I understand Osage--they even had 2 theaters and a bowling alley at one time. It was a booming coal camp area. In fact, Scotts Run, I understand, had like 60 coal... small and big coal mines operating during the War, sending coal all over the country and out of the country. Again, like I said, I always thought it was great to have all of this-- it was like living in a little city. And having the train go down the middle of the street. And now that I'm an adult and environmentally-conscious, I realize how dangerous that was, and environmentally harmful to have a train go right through the community 24/7!

EH: With coal flying off.

MC: Yes! But bouncing from 2 different households really taught me to this day, to live in a privileged and a not privileged world. And I've had to live in both world throughout my life. And that... I always looked back on my mother being poor and ill--was sad in a way, but then in another way, I really learned a lot of life skills having to live, thankfully, with a best friend of my mother's.

EH: Right.

MC: And...

EH: Do you remember class being any issue between the two of them, your mother and Mary Jane?

MC: No. They never said...you know when I wanted to go home to my...see my brothers and visit, Mary Jane never said, "Well you know you're not gonna get cookies or milk and you know the house is dirty." Nothing like that. And the same with my mother. If I wanted to go with Mary Jane, you know, it was...they were that close. Oh, they were... both were non-practicing God-fearing women. And they always used their wit and clichés to put you in check immediately.

EH: (laughs)

MC: Like you know, if you were doing something that they didn't like, they gave you that snake eye look and tell you, "God doesn't like ugly!" And "If you ever steal a nickel you will definitely pay back a dime." And "No bird flies so high that it hasn't come down for water. I mean they always had something like that and look at you and say, "God'll get you for that!" (laughs) And, but both were very well read and highly political. I remember just being maybe 8,9 years old, them taking me to the polls where they were working for certain politicians. Democrats, mainly (laughs) Passing out those little miniature bottles of liquor and their cards--the politicians, you know, would give to them, and then plus pay them for being at the polls all day and maybe going to Chaplin or different coal camp areas to pick people up to come and

vote for them. That was a really fun day! I... and again, being raised in that kind of environment and with them, I'm very political! (laughs) But and respect was always a must with both of 'em. In fact, on one occasion when living with my mom, knowing that my Aunt Loma had a fondness for wine, and, well she was considered a wino. That gave me the you know, notion that I could disrespect her. Well, my mom gave me a different idea by cracking me over the head with a China plate! (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

MC: Immediately when she... (laughs) Her niece, you know, being disrespectful to my aunt. No, that wasn't allowed. But that's the only time. And I think it was one of those old plates that had a crack in it. Hairline crack. But she did crack it over my head. But that was the extent of my growing up in Scotts Run and I still live here. My brothers and I have... I'm a 35-year Mon County school secretary, retired. And my brothers and I had a local pub here in Osage, McFadden's, named after my mother's maiden name.

EH: Okay.

MC: For 40 years, about 40 years we had a pub and an antique shop, and I had a tea room. We were... we always had a business and had something going on. All of us, although, you know... none of us out of 8 brothers and 1 girl, none of us were formally educated as far as college or anything like that. But we all had really good work ethics and was always, always had a nice appearance. And so the fact that my mother was very poor and ill a lot of times, that was instilled in us.

EH: What was her heritage and your father's heritage?

MC: Well, her heritage was-- it was unfortunate how she ended up in Pittsburgh. Her parents-- she was born in Turtle Creek, PA, and due to a divorce she came to West Virginia and married 2 men that were-- I say, to this day--were bad choices. And my father was like a lot of coal miners. They ruled their wives and kids with an iron fist. And that was the case with my mom and dad. And having one kid after another, the old saying, "barefoot and pregnant?" Well, I don't remember them ever being together, but I know from what I've heard and what I know, what went on, that she was one of those. And he was one of those men that ruled her with an iron fist so to speak. And I think a lot of miners did that because they were ruled with an iron fist in the coal industry. So it's just like an abused child becomes an abuser. And I think the way they lived rough and... they became rough, abusive men.

EH: Yeah, like the system of violence.

MC: Yes.

EH: For ethnic heritage, were they from...

MC: Well she was McFadden. She was Irish, Scotts-Irish, I understood. And I don't know what Red was. What their gene pool was too much, other than his sister Aunt Loma, and my Uncle Slats, who spent a lot of time in our home. They really respected my mother and both of 'em were helpful during the times that I lived with them. They were heavy drinkers, winos is what they were, and then they came home to roost and to (laughs) get cleaned up and that, but I mean they were wonderful cooks. My Aunt Loma would send my brother Charlie and Danny who were younger than myself, out to pick whatever was in season-- blackberries or blueberries or... and crabapples. She could make the best cobbler with crabapples! And people just don't believe that, but we would pick them. And she would make a cobbler and they made... and Uncle Slats made homemade bread. But there was a lot of that throughout the coal camp on Osage Hill. You could walk out the row and in all the coal camp houses you could smell soup beans, pinto beans, and always homemade bread or pepperoni rolls. There was always an abundance of that. And you

could go in anyone's house and you were welcome. And my friend Louise, or Miss Kitty, who is Miss Sarah's sister that comes here.

EH: Oh right.

16:05

16:05

MC: And if they had bread, homemade rolls... like I said, there was always an abundance of that. And beans. (laughs)

EH: So there was sort of a system of sharing or communal...

MC: Oh yes, definitely. Yes. I think that's a trait of a lot of people around here to this day and my friend Louise and myself and that we're...all of us are I think fairly giving people.

EH: Well it seems like that's continuing in the museum and sort of the coffee shop, which is by donation, and sort of anyone can come and sit.

MC: Right. Mmhm. If they put something in the jar that's fine, if they don't, that's also fine.

EH: So is Osage Hill this ridge that was...

MC: Uh-huh, directly...

EH: Okay. Like where the Settlement House is?

MC: Well, yeah, towards that way, towards that way. But it's over to the left.

EH: Okay. And that was also part of Scotts Run.

MC: Right.

EH: And did more middle class families live there?

MC: Oh no, there were several poor and then there were several that their dads worked... for example, Louise. Louise's dad was a pumper. They called him... he was there 24/7 almost, in the mines. And he never missed work or...and they were a little...they were better off than my mom was. Now Eddie Gustie, the Gustie family, same way with him. He worked all the time overtime and they were the first people on Osage Hill to get an indoor bathroom and a porch-- put a porch on their old coal camp house.

EH: Nice. What were the race relations and relationships between ethnic groups?

MC: Well, I started school when we were segregated. In fact, Louise and I started first grade-- I went to the school that's presently there around the corner, Osage Junior High, and then there was a hill...there was a school up on the hill called Floyd B. Cox. That's where the black students... and at that time they called them "colored." That was the "colored"--they used that phrase freely then. But second grade, we were together. But prior to...

EH: So first grade was segregated, second grade was...

MC: ...yeah. I have a picture over here of us when we were little. I don't... did you see that?

EH: I don't think so.

MC: I know this is just audio, but she...

EH: Oh maybe I have seen that.

MC: She went there and I went to that school.

EH: Oh, okay.

MC: That was the 2 schools. And we stayed all night together. You know? I was always in her house or she was in mine. Now this was the Gustie house here. Now that's when I happened to be staying with Mary Jane.

EH: Okay.

MC: And this is her nephew Roger.

EH: I think I saw that--is that in the CD?

MC: Yes. And this is the 3 of us as adults. My daughter took this at a wedding.

EH: Very cute.

MC: We are still... we travel together, we are still friends and all the black kids that I went to school with. I see them often at grocery stores and you know, we have a close relationship. They always came to the pub and even in the 60s when they were down south when it was heavily fought that you know, that they didn't want black kids to go to the schools and that... and well, I think they were even having some problems here on campus but in this particular area, I don't remember them ever having race... a race war with one another. As far as one of the neighbors being prejudiced or... pretty much all the kids that were a little, were better off than my family and my mother, there was other kids that were in the same boat and then the kids that were a little better off, their dads were coal miners. They weren't doctors or lawyers--no, that was across the bridge (laughs). Across Star City Bridge, you know, you had that clientele. But the clientele down here was pretty much... I don't know. I really don't know of many students. None! I don't know of any that was of a professor or a doctor or a lawyer or...

EH: So mostly working class.

MC: Yes. Mmhm. They worked in the coal mines or the glass factories. And then the hospital opened. Ruby, then. What was West Virginia University Hospital. And a lot of people were hired there as custodians or painters or maintenance, and that opened up.

EH: Okay. Did former miners go work there?

MC: I don't... I'm not... You know, I'm not, I wasn't privy, or didn't make myself privy to that information.

EH: Right. When you were growing up, did you hear any stories about families who had moved to Arthurdale?

MC: I heard about that and Buster, Mr. Buster Brown, a black gentleman that-- he lived in one of our rental units. He put some of the African American people in their place about Eleanor Roosevelt. Eleanor Roosevelt was not the one that didn't want the blacks. They-- people at Arthurdale voted on that--that they didn't want blacks of foreigners. They thought the foreigners were worse than the blacks. But Eleanor Roosevelt was disappointed in that. And he really, he was the only black that really defended her with that.

EH: Ah, uh-huh.

MC: They said you know, a lot of them would sit at the bar and didn't know their history, 'cause he would say, "You need to read your history!" (laughs) He would tell them!

EH: That's funny. Yeah, I've been reading about that recently.

MC: And that was not so! And he... well and at that time they had a community garden across the street, behind the museum here. And he was made the foreman of the community garden. He didn't want to go to Arthurdale. He wouldn't have went if they wanted to take him.

EH: Yeah.

MC: But I know in the bar setting, you know, I'd be behind the bar or...

EH: People would be talking.

MC: Yeah, so... uh-huh. That subject would come up. And, oh, he'd be getting real loud. "Oh, no!" (laughs)

EH: So, but other people would say...

MC: ..."This was how it went. I was there! I was there!" (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Yeah. Well I also read...

MC: I'd say, okay Buster, calm down.

EH: Yeah (laughs) I also read they took only the "best-off" families too-- to Arthurdale--because they wanted it to succeed. So...

MC: And the only negative that I heard about... from a white person in reference to Eleanor Roosevelt...Helen Wasic (sp?) said that when they took the pictures and when they went into the houses down here, they went into the worst circumstances. They did not go into her family's house, where, which I'm familiar with because we lived in one house that you actually scrubbed wood with Clorox and lyme or something. And that's the way their house was. It was always--they didn't have anything, but it was spotless. And they had a garden and they were very resourceful. And there was other families here that was resourceful, but they were all clumped into one category. And Helen was always upset about that-- that they didn't go into some of the houses and take pictures of someone that was a little better off than the ones that they did go into.

EH: And this was the WPA, the Farm Security Administration?

MC: Yeah. She was, she mentioned that a few times! (laughs) She was just as much, just as upset as Buster was about that. (laughs)

EH: Right, right!

MC: His story! (laughs)

EH: Let's see...Could you tell me a little bit about how the museum came about?

MC: Well, when I retired and part of my building that housed the pub and the tearoom and the antique shop burned, I just had retired and was... well, long story short, I got involved with the Park and Recreation group, and they were also a part of the museum. This is the 3rd museum in Osage. One--the first one started up the street and the building started deteriorating, leaking, and you know... and they had to have somewhere to put the artifacts and a lot of the artifacts that were donated over the years that it was there were ruined. Well, they had an opportunity to put it in my building--part of it that was...that burned, but they refused to do that and so they put it in the community building, which was considered the community building, but was once the fire hall. That's what it was built for in 1968. Well, it ended up the same thing. Bad decision making, no money, as we have right now, older members, older board members, they cannot get and do as much as they did. Even myself, I just turned 70 and it's hard for me to engineer a fundraiser and work it. That takes a lot of work. Well, anyway, another story--that building became moldy, mildewy from a leaking roof, and a lot of the artifacts-- Hoosier cabinets, glass cabinets--really nice stuff that they acquired over the years-- was oh... now I always say, if my brother Danny, who had been living, he was my partner in all of this. I lost him to an automobile accident in 2003. He would have cussed!

EH: (laughs)

MC: Cussed them out for who was responsible for letting that happen, 'cause he was quite the history person. I mean really, he knew all about every president, their administration, names of their cabinets, and what their policies were. I mean that's how...he could read a book tonight, 500 page, and tell you everything the next day. But anyway, he would have cussed. Well I cried when I saw that stuff. And, you know, what a Hoosier cabinet is, it has that flour bin in it?

EH: Yeah.

MC: And they're just gorgeous and I saw that one up the street. And oh, it was full of bird doo-doo and rat doo-doo, and mildew. And a lot of the stuff, well, what we could salvage was just very few. A lot of the stuff here in the museum is the collection from our brother Danny. He collected antiques. But, now the stove was in the museum. It took 5 of us to clean that up. And that shelf was-- I worked on that for days in my yard and hosed it before I would bring it in. It would look a lot better painted, but the group voted that you know, they wanted to stay the same.

30:40

But I gave 'em an offer that they couldn't not refuse: free rent for a year until they started getting on the ball with fundraisers or getting grants. Well, that was what, 6, 7 years ago? It'll be 7 years this September (laughs).

EH: (laughs)

MC: They still get free rent! And I'm okay with that because I have a school retirement and social security and I also have 4 rentals that...I'm okay to do that to give back to my community because my brothers and

I have not only financially from our business...it's time for me to give back to the community. And I think everyone should, especially if you reaped a harvest. And not only financially, but growing up here, with the people that we grew up around. And well another thing about growing up, I didn't have to worry about my mom or Mary Jane if I did something wrong. I, you know, Miss Kitty or Miss Sarah or whoever, if they would see you do something you know, they could correct you, and when they took that home and told your mom or Mary Jane, "Well I saw Janey doing this or doing that," and you know, they didn't say, "Oh no you didn't. She wouldn't do that." Oh no! (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

MC: You know, you were, you just wasn't allowed to do that. And they knew that their neighbors or their friends wasn't gonna lie on ya.

EH: Right, yeah.

MC: It takes a village. Mmhm. And I'm giving back to the village in my little small way, I think.

EH: I think it's big!

MC: As long as I can, you know, afford it. And I'm able physically.

EH: Mmhm. Right.

MC: And the older people just-- John (Propst) who grew up on Osage Hill, and George (Sarris) spent, you know, his young life down here. And they are all retired and they look forward to it-- coming every Saturday. It gives them something to look forward to and to talk about growing up in Scotts Run. Well, and then the coal miners too, that come. We had 24 come Saturday.

EH: Wow.

MC: And it's about that many and sometimes even more on Saturdays. Well, you have been here.

EH: Yeah. I don't know if there's been 24, but there's been close to that! So how did you sort of become the director? Was that when you offered them rent?

MC: I think Professor Faulkes gave me that title. (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

MC: I didn't ask for it! (laughs)

EH: Well you are!

MC: Yes! (laughs) I did not ask for that, but here I am! But our president, Miss Sarah (Boyd Little), just turned 95.

EH: Very cool.

MC: Lou Birurakis-- he's 93. So you know, that speaks for itself that they are not able to do fundraisers.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

MC: And including myself. I'm not a grant writer.

EH: Mmhm. Yeah.

MC: And the grants that we have sought, 5,000 other organizations have... (laughs) have applied. And that's the case also. It's hard getting monies from anyone. I had the Mylan Foundation, the gal that's in charge of that--she came down and talked to Professor Faulkes and George and myself, a couple months ago. I haven't heard anything.

EH: Yeah, well it's hard, you know they want things that are very visible.

MC: Yes. But it was worth the old college try and I still try to talk to people about it and if I go to a restaurant and I meet someone new-- If I go by myself and sit in the bar area to eat and the person next to me, if I strike up a conversation, I'll give 'em a card. (laughs) Promote the place.

EH: Say you're a non-profit.

MC: Yes. Different places that I go, so...And I hope everyone else does that. I think they do.

EH: Yeah.

MC: I know Albert does. And I took Albert-- Albert just turned 82 on Sunday. Albert Anderson. And I took him to the Japanese Steakhouse at the Town Center. I thought for sure he had been to-- been there or a restaurant like that where they fix the-- in front of you with the fire and everything. Oh, he was just tickled pink. He called me the next day and thanked me for his birthday party. (laughs)

EH: Aw, that's cute.

MC: Yeah! He said he just, you know, that was the cat's meow. (laughs)

EH: Well what was your vision for the museum or for the coffee shop?

MC: Well I thought that it would, you know, be the heartbeat down here. It would just maybe bring a little pulse to the town and do what it's doing, do exactly what it's doing. Bring some people here. We have had people visit from all over the country in the 6 years that we have been here. We've been here since 2012. We've had people out of the country, all over the country visit. We've had lots of people come that grew up here but left by way of the service or moved to the car industry in Michigan or moved to Ohio to different jobs like that and come back and visit and just thank me for having it here and just couldn't get over, you know, the fact that there was something to come and something to see-- pictures to look at and people that they even grew up with to talk to. When we had a fundraiser at the VFW, a dance, a couple of those people-- one came from Alabama, one came from Texas, just for that weekend, to come to that dance.

EH: Cool!

MC: Mmhm.

EH: So you always wanted it to be a community center that would bring people together?

MC: Yes. Mmhm. Mmhm.

EH: So Al talked a little bit about some of these perceived efforts to dissolve Osage and the highway coming through and the mall. Do you have a picture of that history? Because Al was very scattered.

MC: Oh yes, I know that... Osage was weakened immensely. Our population was weakened by the I-79 and then we were also weakened by floods. The population had to move. The county bought out a lot of houses and...

EH: When was that?

MC: '96 was the last one. And I think they bought right here downtown. My brother's property was one. There was 2 across the creek I'm sure. One up the street. I know there was at least 6,7 down on the lower end below the school. I think there was 4 or 5 houses there that we lost. And losing our charter didn't help.

EH: And that was for...that was the city charter.

MC: Yes. And we had-- I say the PSD [Public Service District] was a heartbeat, and we lost that. It just seems like it has just been stripped from you know, its identity, completely. It's sad. And now I say we are--those left behind, those of us that are left behind, we suffer environmentally from the fly-ash trucks, from the coal trucks. I just hired a gal to hose my--front of my building-- but that could be done all the time. And then we also have people that are not nice for the environment that actually wait for rain and when the creek gets high and the water's flowing rapidly enough, will throw the stockpile of garbage that they have in the creek. I can watch it go down and then some of it gets hung up behind my buildings here. In fact I wrote a letter to the editor and it hasn't been put in the paper yet.

EH: Oh. Is this the Morgantown paper?

MC: Yeah, it hasn't been put in the paper yet.

EH: How long ago did you send it?

MC: Oh last week. I'm not sure if it's gonna end up in there or not. But I'd like to see it end up in there because I've called the authorities who have jurisdiction over it and they come and they tell 'em they have to get the garbage off their porch and just when I sit down at my desktop and wrote that, I had walked up the street and they have the garbage knee high...waiting for rain!

EH: Wow. Oh no.

MC: I mean it's... I had... in my lifetime I had 4-5 Volkswagens when I was living with that poor hat on.

EH: Uh-huh.

MC: Even before the environment was you know, when it was environmentally fashionable, or it wasn't fashionable to throw cigarette butts out. I did not do that! I wouldn't even throw a cigarette butt out my old Volkswagen, you know? (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Right.

MC: Window. But I just have a hard time with someone that does that and throws trash in the creek banks and now that's a problem we're having here. And it's not only directly in Osage. I think people from up the run-- Scotts Run was named after the creek. (laughs)

EH: Right. Yeah.

MC: And we got the Public Service District and got the creek cleaned up and...

EH: But now that that's gone there isn't anyone monitoring it?

MC: Yes, now people are just throwing garbage in it instead of you know, instead of being a sewer system [as it used to be before the Public Service District] (laughs).

EH: Oh. So when the highway came through, there was population decline because they tore down houses?

MC: Yes. Yes. We lost a lot of residents. Yeah. So... you know I-79 whips right around, right back up there--that's going to Pennsylvania.

EH: Okay.

MC: And then when you make that loop. Yeah, there were several houses. Well, Osage Hill. I think Osage Hill-- I think it had probably 50 coal camp houses.

EH: That all got destroyed? (repeats)

44:56

MC: Well..

EH: Or were torn down because of the...

MC: The road took the...

EH: Imminent domain?

MC: Yes, mmhm. The only house up there is Nancy's and Steve Weatherspoon's (sp?) and Mary Kay Lehman's (sp?). There's 3. 3 houses up there now.

EH: And Al's father's was taken?

MC: Yes. Now he was-- now we called it Dog Hill-- on the other side.

EH: Okay.

MC: Osage Hill was on this side and Dog Hill was on that side. Now I think there's maybe 7 or 8 houses up there. Maybe. I know Bob... Bob and Norma... or maybe about 5 or 6.

EH: So I guess what would be-- I know the museum has a vision statement on the website-- but what would be your ideal vision for Scotts Run and the museum?

MC: I would just love to see it copy Durbin [West Virginia] and communities like that. Like a reenactment of the stores, or some shops. But I just, I don't know--that would take an awful big grant. But I mean that is-- I would love to see that but that's not gonna happen in my lifetime I know. That's really stretching (laughs) my vision. My vision is going way out there! But I would like-- my vision would be low-income housing. I would love to see the area become low-income housing for seniors and for families. Low-income families. I have 3 units that are HUD approved. HUD housing. And I leave my name on the list although I don't have anything available, HUD recipients call me to find out whether I have something or not. Instead of me calling and telling them to take my name off, I would prefer to get the calls and talk to that person that's calling and tell them what a hard time they are having finding low-income housing. And everything in Mon County is geared towards students. Not low-income families. And not every low-income family is on drugs or drunks or druggies and... I have had Stanley, who is a product of Katrina.

EH: Mmm. Okay.

MC: How many years ago was that? Yeah, I have had him for probably going on 7 years.

EH: Okay.

MC: And I have no problems whatsoever. In fact he-- his family wants him to come back to New Orleans and no, he doesn't want to.

EH: No?

MC: He's happy here and he's on HUD and Earl at the end apartment and Gloria and I could tell-- I know some of 'em have given the HUD recipients bad names, a lot of them, you know. But not all of them. But they could call for references and that. But getting back to why I stay on the list to talk to that person is to tell them to call the county, call their house of delegate persons and tell them how much low-income housing is needed. And it really is! Nancy-- her mother died 5 years ago and it's a must now-- it was in her will that she has to sell her house. Nancy has looked all over this county for a place. And it's, it's just not happening for her. And when that house sells, that she's living in, her mother's house, when it is sold, I'm not sure what she's gonna do. But that is my vision for the area, is for low-income housing and they could very well do that up on Osage Hill. There's property there. Down here-- talk to the property, some of the property owners that are just letting their buildings fall down in the street.

50:55

EH: So are those property owners absentee? Do they live here?

MC: No, they live in Morgantown. And live very comfortably. But-- well the Morris property, the one that has fallen down the street-- is tied up in family. It's an enterprise. But all of it has to be sold, I guess. Not only their properties here in Osage, but they have some on Osage Hill. And that block factory? They own that too. And it's all tied up. All of it has to be sold and... and again that's another problem for the residents that are left behind here. That building literally fell down in the street. And it's still there. No one's cleaning the debris up.

But I don't know-- you travel throughout the state. I know there's a lot of coal camp areas that are in dire need of the same thing that we are in need of.

EH: Yeah, I think...

MC: That may not even have a pulse like a museum to...

EH: Right, that's true. But...

MC: To resemble that there was once something there.

EH: Yeah. But some of those places, or a lot of those places are in counties that are poorer so it's... because this is seen as Monongalia County and that there's a lot of money here because of Morgantown. So I don't think there are as many places that are in proximity to a perceived wealthier area. So there is kind of a specific problem here, I think, because the local money isn't coming here.

MC: No. No, I think it is because we're in this bowl and we're cut off from Morgantown and Star City and the Town Center now. We're just down here all... like we have a wall around us and actually we do!

EH: Yeah. What are-- do you still encounter-- what are the receptions or perceptions of Scotts Run that you encounter out in the world?

MC: Well, I have, you never hear much about the other communities. It's mainly Osage because we had so many beer gardens, bars, night clubs throughout the years. And we had some rough and tumbling characters and it developed a name for itself and people-- I'll give you an example. Dale Cottingham-- his mother grew up here, Shirley Jackson-- and he went to, he was going to WVU and on orientation day, whoever was guiding them around, taking them and telling them different things and you know, it was kids from all over the area. They all said-- he said-- "But whatever you do, don't go to Osage." And Dale said I raise my hand, "Well what if you live there?" (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

54:54

MC: Yeah! He said, "Well what if you live there!" (laughs) But that's-- I think that's par... maybe not so much now, I don't know. 'Cause there's nothing here and there's no one, everyone's old and decrepit, that none of us can fight. There's no barroom fighters down here.

EH: There's no barroom.

MC: And that's been a perception that I've had people even ask me, "You live there?" And I said, "Yes, I've lived there all my life." "Aren't you afraid to live down there?" "No! No!" (laughs) "Haven't had any reason to!" And which is true. And maybe cause I'm an insider. No. No one is raped daily or beat over the head or anything like that.

EH: Except for with a china plate. (laughs)

MC: Yeah, I've had a person tell me that they had a flat tire and was scared to death and afraid for their lives! And I said well why? (laughs)

EH: Yeah, everyone here would have helped you!

MC: You know, you could have knocked on the door. On my door! (laughs)

EH: Yeah right. Yeah, that's too bad. But maybe that's kind of an old.. from when there was kind of a booming scene...

MC: Yes. When-- it was a rough and tumbling-- as I call it, at one time. And there was a lot of barroom fights and street fights. But Morgantown's becoming-- people have pulled out guns here in the last 5-6 years. And there's been actually murders taking place. And beatings and robberies. I mean it happens...it's everywhere. I mean, I still check my doors every night and I'm not saying that I'm that lax. But when we were growing up, in the summer time we had screen doors on this end of the house and that end of the house and you just walked right through. (laughs) You know, we never locked the doors and, well especially in the summer time you had just the screen door because you didn't have air conditioning inside! (laughs)

EH: Let's see...What do you want to be remembered and known about Scotts Run and Osage? How would you rather people think of it?

58:17

MC: Well, I don't know. Just the fact that we're not scary people and there's a lot of people that came from Osage that--a Jones kid that I grew up that went to Harvard and became a millionaire and is an investor.

EH: Does he want to fund the museum?

MC: What is it?

EH: Does he want to fund the museum?

MC: (laughs) No, I wish he would. Yeah. But I mean there's a lot of people that came from Scotts Run and well... moved to Morgantown and left here with a lot of money. The Lavines sp (?) that we bought the property from--Max Lavine-- he had a clothing store and made big money. And Eggway who had Eggway's restaurant and some property over there. There's a lot of millionaires that came right from this little town.

EH: So people sort of benefitted from the place.

MC: Yes.

EH: But not necessarily--it hasn't benefitted the place.

MC: No. No. The town has not benefitted well at all. And the coal industry made big money from this area. In fact, I often call attention to the fact that there was 56 miners that died over there in an explosion in 1942 and they have never been recognized as been given a memorial or monument or anything to this day, by the coal industry or the county or the state.

EH: Yeah.

MC: I think that's kinda sad. Now some of my group continues to want a park over there. In fact Lou called me today and wants to work on the park. In the last 5 years, or well the last 10 years, I know it's been flooded 5 times. (laughs) It keeps... and construction sites are dumping debris from their sites that's going down into the park, down into the mouth of where that explosion happened.

EH: Wow.

MC: I would like to see a monument put in the empty parking lot to talk to the Solomons to-- so we could erect something there right on the street at the end of my property down there would be nice and to put a couple park benches, and for people to recognize their names and that it happened. We have some big posters on the fence right now and have all their names on it, but that would... a nice monument would be nice with all their names on it. But I just don't think that it would be a good idea to put it over in the park area where the last museum was with... because of the flooding. I think that area could be filled in and used as low-income housing, though!

EH: Yeah, right. What else-- is there anything else about the history here that you would want to be remembered?

MC: Well, I... the people. I would like people to continue to talk about them and there was so many interesting people that I grew up with. Black people, white people, and foreigners that came here to make a living and there is quite a history of foreigners and African Americans that came from down south to work here in the mines, you know because the coal barons sent their people down south and then out of the country to recruit weak minds and strong backs. And a lot of those people were foreigner and like I said, and African American that left where they were for a better life and had a hard time in the beginning with organizing and a lot of that took place. And that men have died throughout Scotts Run in the coalfields. There's quite a bit of history here. That's what I would like. And a lot of those women that brought about change and the women that came here that started the Settlement House, The Shack, and St. Ursula's. I'd like for all of that to be remembered. And those people that-- and even the fact that the first lady came her and her intentions were honorable. That's quite a story there. I would hate for all of that to be forgotten.

EH: Yeah.

MC: And as far as me and my family, I would like for people to remember us that I heard someone say that, "Oh, the way those kids were raised," meaning me and my brothers, you know, making statements like that. Oh no, we... all of us had very good jobs and retired, 30 and 40 years from you know, our job positions and like I always say, we always brushed our teeth and (motions) (laughs) washed our ass and you know, and did well. Regardless of how we started out in life. I can honestly say that I'm proud of myself and my brothers and we came from this very coal camp where we're sitting here today! And the company store, you know, my dad-- I don't remember it-- but I know he did like a lot of coal miners-- you know, they took their paychecks, the coal industry. The company store owned their souls and we ended up owning--me and my brothers-- ended up buying the company store and the whole block! (laughs)

EH: Oh, that's the old company store building?

MC: Oh yeah, this property was the old company store building. Yeah, we ended up owning it.

EH: You got 'em in the end.

MC: Yes. Mmhm. Yes, I remember, I don't know if I want this to be told or not, but I remember my brother Danny, one summer when I was home with my mother, and we went, like I said, I never go cookies and milk when I was with my brothers and my mother, but he stole a bag of sugarsnap cookies from the store (laughs) and the shopkeeper, the company store keeper chased us all the way on Osage Hill after those sugarsnap cookies! (laughs) Needless to say, we didn't need to always steal sugarsnap cookies anymore. I think that was scary.

EH: Yeah, I bet.

MC: At least when I was around anyway. (laughs) Didn't want to play power to that. (laughs) That was scary.

1:07:45

EH: Yeah, and so I guess what-- like after there's sort of the museum regulars, but do you hope that it continues on, or how do you see it might continue?

MC: Oh yes, I do. In fact, I often worry about the age group. If they're no longer here, I certainly hope new people... well some new people are showing up. And as they find out about the museum being here. Cause I will meet people at the store and in fact I met a parent from Cassville-- that's another coal camp community 4 miles from here-- at the grocery store and he didn't even know that the museum existed, that I had it open. And he said that he and his wife would come stop by. So a lot of people are... I guess they just zoom by and you know, as heavy as the traffic is-- I guess because we sit back a little bit.

EH: And all those, the kids who live here, they go to school in Morgantown or where do they go to school?

MC: They, well the kids from this district go to Mylan (?) Park Elementary.

EH: Okay.

MC: Mylan Elementary. And then from there middle school, they go to Westwood in Westover. And...

EH: So there isn't really a local school.

MC: And then from there, University High.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, so if there were a local school you could be more connected with that, but...

MC: Well and that's another thing we lost. We lost our school, the local school. We lost the post office.

EH: Right. And the post office was lost when the town lost its charter?

MC: No, that was... how many years has that been? I think it's been at least 7 years. 7,8,9,10 years somewhere? I have no conception of... especially years. "When was that? 5 years ago?" When the federal government, I guess, they shut down a lot of them throughout the country.

EH: Oh yeah.

MC: And a lot were here in West Virginia.

EH: Yeah, the consolidated a lot.

MC: Yes. Mhm. You know, I'm not sure if they even have one in Maidsville now. They did have a local post office down there. Well, no they do have one there. There is one here in Scotts Run-- Pursglove has one.

EH: Okay.

MC: That's the only one for you to go and buy stamps other than across the bridge. You can go up there and get a money order or a book of stamps, fortunately.

EH: Well, I think those are all my questions. Oh, maybe could you tell me a little bit about some of the projects you've done through the museum?

1:11:47

MC: Well, we did have a spaghetti dinner fundraiser at The Shack. We did have a dance at the VFW. And every year we have the street fair.

EH: Right.

MC: And when we had a few kids here, we had a little Halloween party for the kids. And Christmas. I do have, well just a couple weeks ago I had Easter dinner in here, and I invite Albert and some of the people from the area that they don't have their family here. And you know, and then I send to-go plates to Miss Tate who lives up on the end. She's in her 90s. And on the holidays. And 4th of July we always have a... try to have a big picnic. And I have the patio left from where the pub and the antique was, and have picnic tables there. But small events like Easter and Thanksgiving, I'll have here and invite the locals.

EH: And was the community garden a museum project?

MC: Oh yes, we had... Daniel who helped us start that... he is still coming. In fact he may be out there right now. It's Tuesday evening.

EH: (laughs) Oh nice.

MC: Yeah, the community garden. That's neat. But well, let me think. Do you know of... Oh! We had that big concert downtown at the Metropolitan. And we worked with a guy out of the country... Maarten Vossen who takes care of a grave of one of our soldiers. His plane went down and he parachuted but his parachute didn't open and he lived right up the road here, here in Scotts Run. He came, he takes care of his grave in Holland. And his name was James Wickline. Through him coming here, he wanted to know all about James Wickline. And it ended up that the bridge, the 2nd bridge coming from Star City, is in honor of James Wickline. We played a big part in that. And he came here and brought his family. That was really neat. And then they had a big honorary thing at the Metropolitan all about Scotts Run where James Wickline was from and that was a packed house also. The concert was, that we had, with Scotts Run music and stories that Professor Faulkes has put together. We could not do without Professor Eve Faulkes. She has been a godsend. All the displays here in the museum. She has her students do something just about every semester. They did little text books all about the Scotts Run from the housing, the coal camp houses, to mischief in Scotts Run. Each little text book, that student took on a subject. There's 14 of them. And she really, oh and this past semester, they have worked on little text books geared for children. And she has given the old buildings, she and her students one summer, a facelift. Painted them and cleaned streets with her students and helped with the street fairs and... She has been the backbone, really. Not to myself, I say Professor Faulkes has really been the backbone of getting this off the ground to where it is today. She and her students.

EH: Yeah, she does so much. And the design is just incredible.

MC: Yes, it is. I couldn't be more pleased.

1:17:24

EH: What would you say are the values of Scotts Run?

MC: Well, I would say be good to your neighbors. And treat people the way you want to be treated is the biggest one, I would say. That's what, you know, I try to teach my grandkids to... not to be bullies or be good to not only their teachers but their classmates and things that I have been taught here. 'Cause the clichés, the examples that I have given you from Mary Jane and my mom, I've also heard on the street or you know, in the bar from foreigners, from African Americans, from white people that I have come in contact with over the years. And I think all of them, regardless of their nationality or their status in life or how rich or poor they were-- I learned from them. And that's another thing that I think is important and I've seen that with a lot of people that I grew up with is... you learn something all the time. You never know it all. You can always be taught from... regardless of who it is and how rich or poor they are or...

EH: Is there anything else you would like to share, or anything you wish I had asked?

MC: I don't think so. No! (laughs) Emily, I think we talked about a lot!

EH: (laughs) Next time we'll get the juicy stories. (laughs) Well thank you so much.

MC: Oh, you're so welcome.

EH: Okay.

1:19:59

END OF TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW